



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Grand Teton National Park

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
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National Elk Refuge

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Winter Bison Count Taken by Grand Teton National Park and the National Elk Refuge

Grand Teton National Park and National Elk Refuge personnel conducted a winter count and classification for the Jackson bison herd on Monday, February 6, 2006. This annual tally is carried out through a ground survey on the National Elk Refuge (NER) and concurrent aerial flight over the Refuge, Grand Teton National Park, and adjacent Bridger-Teton National Forest lands.

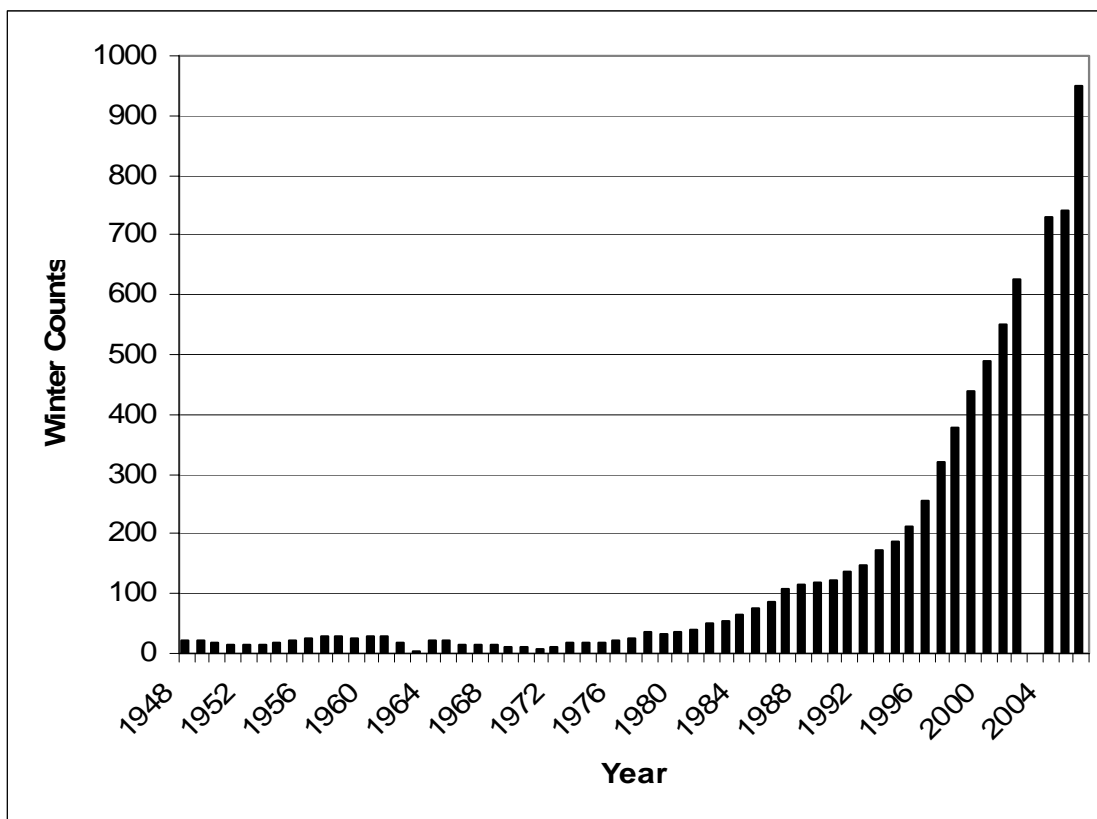
The 2006 bison survey yielded a total of 948 animals, compared with 740 animals counted during March of 2005. However, agency biologists feel that the 2005 count was somewhat low. Few bison were on the NER feed lines at the time of the 2005 count, and the widely scattered distribution of animals resulted in poor counting conditions. On average, the Jackson bison herd has been growing 13% each year for the past 20 years (see graph below).

A total of 887 bison - approximately 94% of the bison counted in 2006- were on the feed lines in the Poverty Flats area of the NER, while 29 bison were counted on native winter range in the Elk Ranch and Uhl Hill portions of Grand Teton National Park. The remaining 32 bison were dispersed across other areas of the NER away from the feed lines; many of these animals were located in the vicinity of Flat Creek, which runs through the Refuge.

Calf production was the highest yet recorded for the Jackson herd, with a minimum of 183 calves surviving to mid-winter. Sex and age composition of the herd is estimated at 75 bulls per 100 cows, and 45 calves per 100 cows. The herd is composed of 23% adult bulls, 37% adult cows, 9% yearling bulls, 6% yearling cows, and 19% calves.

To obtain the wildlife count and classification, three people rode a tracked vehicle between two feed lines laid out by the NER feed trucks; two people counted and classified by age and sex while one person recorded the numbers. Additionally, a pilot and one biologist flew in a small aircraft to count bison away from the feed lines throughout their range.

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Jackson bison herd annual counts, 1948-2006 (no count conducted in 2003)

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